

# Cold Weather Safety Tips for Your Pets

Your pet is always safer and happier when it is indoors with you. Cats should always be kept indoors so that they are not exposed to all of the dangers that exist outside, such as cars, other animals, harsh weather, and cruel people. At night make sure that your pet sleeps away from drafts, preferably in a pet bed. It is also important to make sure that your cat or dog always wears an appropriately fitting collar and an ID tag with your current address and phone number on it (even if your pet never goes outdoors because you never know what might happen). Unless your pet has adequate shelter and is under your supervision, living outdoors can be hazardous for your pet.

Compare the amount of exercise your dog receives during the colder months to that received during the warmer months. If your dog is indoors more during the cold months, he is probably getting less exercise and may need less food. However, if your pet is outside often in the winter months, he may need more food to provide the calories necessary to produce more body heat.



If your dog must be outdoors, then you will need to provide them with a dry, elevated doghouse. The house should be small enough to keep your dog warm by trapping the dog's body heat, but large enough for the dog to stand up and turn around in. The doghouse should have insulation, carpeting, and a door flap and it should be faced away from the wind so that your dog will be protected against the cold. If you live in an area that receives snow, you will need to make sure that it does not pile up high next to your fence because it can provide a boost for your dog to jump over and escape.

When the temperature is below 20 degrees Fahrenheit, it is best to keep all dogs indoors, even if a doghouse is provided. Shorthaired dogs and puppies should always be kept indoors when the weather is 40 degrees Fahrenheit or below.

Regularly check your pet's water to make sure it is not frozen. When your pet is outside, make sure there is plenty of fresh drinking water available. Ice and snow do not provide enough liquid for an animal. Your pets can't burn calories without a fresh supply of water, and if they can't burn calories they will get cold.

If you let your cat outdoors – **BEWARE** -- in their search to keep warm they may crawl into a warm car engine or lie next to a tire. To alert an animal that may be in your vehicle, slap the hood before starting your car. This is another good reason why cats are best kept indoors.

You should always keep your pet's coat well groomed, but especially during the winter months. If your pet's fur becomes matted it will not properly protect them from the cold.

Another danger that lurks outside is antifreeze, which tastes sweet to your pets, but is poisonous for them to consume. If your pet ingests any amount of antifreeze, you will need to contact your veterinarian immediately. It is always a good idea to check your car for antifreeze leaks. When adding antifreeze, make sure you clean up any spills right away and place refill bottles out of your pet's reach. Keep in mind that you can purchase antifreeze and other coolants that are essentially nontoxic to pets at many auto supply stores.

Chemicals can irritate and burn the pads of your pet's feet. Do not allow your pet to lick his feet after he has walked outdoors. The chemicals may burn his mouth and cause serious problems if ingested, which can result in costly vet bills. When your pet comes in from the cold, use a damp towel to wipe off his feet and underside.

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